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SUMMER APPRENTICESHIP IN THE BOSTON HIGH SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

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In the *School Review* for January, 1910, Mr. F. V. Thompson, former head master of the Boston High School of Commerce, referred to the summer employment which constitutes a part of the work of the school. He quoted a letter which had been sent out to the business men of Boston explaining the purpose of giving the boys summer positions. He did not show in a detailed way the results secured or the experience gained by this plan. It is the purpose of this paper to give in more detail the history, results, and present status of summer work by the boys of the school.

Ever since its establishment in 1906, the school has tried to keep in as close touch as possible with the business community. All of the school work is consciously directed toward fitting boys to meet actual business conditions. The plan of summer employment, then, is not entirely separate from the rest of the school work, but merely emphasizes its importance. It gives the boys a chance to apply what they have learned, through actual business experience. With this fact in mind, Mr. Thompson and the Advisory Committee of business men devised the plan of summer apprenticeship for boys of the second and third-year classes.

So long as the school was small it was possible to place boys in summer positions with little difficulty. Much attention could be given to the individual boy, and the number of positions needed was not large. For the past two years, however, increasing numbers have made it necessary to adopt a more systematic plan of procedure. The difficulties encountered during the summer of 1909 led to the adoption of the following plan:

1) To prepare and send out to the merchants of Boston a circular letter outlining our apprenticeship system and asking their co-operation.

2) To follow this up with a series of personal interviews by a representative of the school.

3) To secure definite promises of three hundred positions for the next summer under the following conditions:

a) Each boy to receive two dollars a week. If he proves to be worth more, his pay may naturally be raised. This minimum wage limit is set to give the boy sufficient money to buy lunches and pay car fares. It will also show that wages are a minor consideration, and that the real end is practical business experience.

b) So far as is possible, without interfering with the regular routine of business, the boys shall be assigned work that is sufficiently varied to give them opportunity to observe several phases of the business.

c) Boys shall be given a definite understanding of the purpose of the school in securing for them this summer employment. They shall also be told some of the things (to be learned by consultation with business men) that their experience ought to teach them.

d) The circular letter mentioned above shall be prepared and sent out and the personal interviews shall be secured during the winter and spring (January to March), so that the desired number of positions may be obtained before the last few weeks of the school year.

The letter mentioned was sent out by Mr. Frederick P. Fish, chairman of the Executive Committee of the larger Business Men's Advisory Committee, and was as follows:

DEAR SIR: The High School of Commerce is now entering upon the fourth year of its existence. As a Boston man, you undoubtedly know that the aim of the school is to secure commercial efficiency in its graduates. In pursuance of this end, a large number of pupils in the three upper classes have, in the past, obtained summer employment in business houses. Last summer 65 per cent of the young men in these classes were so employed. This experience forms an invaluable part of the business training which the school desires to give, supplementing, as it does, the theoretical teaching of the classroom.

We feel that the results thus far secured are highly encouraging; but we aim to increase the efficiency of this feature of our work, by forming an even closer connection than now exists between the school and the business interests of the city.

Our plan in brief is as follows: We desire to secure three hundred positions for summer employment at a minimum wage of two dollars per week. This limit is set to give the boys employed sufficient money to pay

car fares and buy lunches. It is not essential that no higher pay shall be received, but wages are a minor consideration. The chief aim is to give the boys business experience.

It seems to us that two or three summers spent in a position of this kind will make our graduates much more efficient and ready for immediate service with any business house. We know of no other way in which the merchants of Boston can more effectively show their interest in commercial education and at the same time insure the opportunity of securing intelligent and efficient young men in the near future, than by agreeing to employ boys of the High School of Commerce under those conditions and thus participating in their development.

We desire to secure promises of positions for next summer as soon as possible. With this end in view, a representative from the school will call upon you in the near future.

Trusting that we shall receive your co-operation, I am

Very truly yours,

Chairman, Executive Committee

In deciding to whom these letters should be sent, valuable assistance was received from several members of the Boston Chamber of Commerce. These men, who are also members of the Business Men's Advisory Committee mentioned above, secured a list of firms from the Chamber of Commerce and checked those which in their opinion would be ready to co-operate with the school by giving summer employment. This gave a list of over six hundred business houses which could be taken as a field in which to work. This list has proved very helpful, although as yet less than half the firms have been visited.

Each week beginning about January 1, a dozen letters were sent out to firms chosen from the list. A teacher from the school called on each firm, explained the plan, and secured promises of positions for the summer. In this way, 172 firms were visited between January and May. Of these, 112 gave favorable replies to the representatives of the school, while 60 answers were unfavorable. This does not mean that 60 firms were hostile to the plan, but simply that the nature of their business was such that they were unable to use boys during the summer. In nearly all cases the business men showed a real interest in the plan, and promised to send to the school for boys if it should be

possible to use them. Through the 172 visits, promises of approximately 220 positions were secured.

It then became necessary to find boys fitted for the available places. To make the adjustment of demand and supply as accurate as possible, the following form of card was placed in the hands of members of the second and third-year classes:

HIGH SCHOOL OF COMMERCE
SUMMER APPRENTICESHIP

Every boy of the Second and Third Year Classes is expected to spend at least four weeks of his summer vacation as an employee in a business house subject to the following conditions:

1. *He must be sufficiently mature to undertake such work.*
2. *He must have a satisfactory school record.*
3. *He must be recommended by his Room Teacher.*
4. *He will take with him to the business house a summary of his school record, and bring back to the school a summary of his record with the business house.*

5. *He must secure his parent's signature to the following statement:
I have read the above statements and approve of my son's working during the summer of 19.... under the conditions mentioned.*

The school will TRY to secure boys positions in the kind of business for which they express a preference, but does not guarantee doing so.

.....
Parent's Signature

Sign one (not both) of the following:

(For those who have no position in view for next summer).

1. *I desire to secure a position in the business during the coming summer.*

(For those who have a position in view for next summer).

2. *I have secured a position in the business with theCo. for the coming summer.*

Pupil's Signature.....

Address.....

Class.....Age.....

As will be readily seen, this card gave the Employment Bureau information which enabled it to make a satisfactory adjustment of boys to positions. In case a boy had already secured a position himself, it was at once possible to add the name of the firm employing him to the list of co-operating firms mentioned above.

Naturally in any adjustment such as this some shrinkage must be expected. Promises made in January cannot always be carried out in June. Many boys depend on the money earned during the summer to pay school expenses for the following year, and consequently cannot afford to accept positions at two dollars a week for the sake of experience. Nevertheless the school was able either directly or indirectly to place approximately 190 boys in summer positions last year. Besides these 56 found places for themselves, so that the total number employed was 246. This statement includes the present three upper classes of the school. In the two highest classes the figures were as follows: working, 162 (63 per cent); not working, 97 (37 per cent).

Perhaps a word of explanation should be given regarding boys listed as not working. In most cases, the boy's parents did not wish him to work, or else he was considered too immature. In very few cases were boys who wished to work unable to secure positions. Of course the school could not, and did not desire to, force a boy to work against his parents' wishes.

The work of the Employment Bureau in securing positions was confined almost entirely to the second and third-year classes. It was found, however, that many first-year boys secured positions of their own initiative. In every such case the school was very glad to furnish as a recommendation a summary of the boy's school record.

As will be seen from the card shown above, every boy was expected to take such a record with him to the business house. The following form of letter was devised for this purpose:

The bearer of this note is completing his year as a student in the High School of Commerce. He wishes to secure a position with your firm for summer work in accordance with the Apprenticeship Plan already explained to you by a representative of the school.

His school record is as follows: Conduct Scholarship Co-operation Industry Politeness Honesty Reliability

I should be pleased to have you talk with the bearer of the note, and if you believe that he has qualities which would make him desirable in your employment I should be glad to have you give him an opportunity.

Additional information concerning the boy will be furnished should you have specific questions in mind.

Very truly yours,

Head Master, High School of Commerce

The facts necessary to fill out the letter are obtained from the boy's "character card." This card, shown below, is kept on file in the school office and is filled out three times each year by the teacher in whose room the boy sits. The boys know that these "character cards" form the basis of their recommendations. This form of card is intended to cover those points which most directly interest business men in their choice of employment, and was adopted after consultation with the Business Men's Committee:

YEAR 1909 TEACHER Wm. Jones		HIGH SCHOOL OF COMMERCE	
Name	Doe, John		
Conduct	Good	Poor	Fair
Scholarship	Fair	Only passable, could be better	Passable, could be better
Punctuality	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Attendance	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Athletics	No evidence	None	None
Leadership		None	Wanting
Popularity	Good	Good	Wanting
Co-operation	Fair	Wanting	Wanting
Personal Appearance	Pleasing	OK	Pleasing
Health	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Politeness	Good	Good	Good
Honesty		OK	OK
Reliability	Good	Unreliable	Not Good

Another feature of the plan adopted this year is the record of efficiency which the boy is expected to bring back from his summer position. This is permanently filed in the Employment Bureau. It is printed on the opposite side of the card which shows the line of business a boy wishes to enter, and is filled out by his employer.

RECORD OF EFFICIENCY FOR SUMMER OF 19....

Filled out by Official position.....
Firm Name Date
A.—Excellent. B.—Good. C.—Fair. D.—Poor.

	<i>Responsibility.</i> 1. <i>Working well without supervision.</i> 2. <i>Working for results.</i>
	<i>Initiative.</i> 1. <i>Energy in going ahead and doing things alone.</i> 2. <i>Ability to meet emergencies.</i>
	<i>Accuracy.</i> 1. <i>Making few mistakes.</i> 2. <i>Doing work neatly and thoroughly.</i>
	<i>Co-operation.</i> <i>Ability to work well with others.</i>
	<i>Appearance.</i> <i>Good taste in dress and manner.</i>

The interest shown by the boys in returning good efficiency records shows that this check on the summer's work has a definite value.

The results of the plan thus far are decidedly gratifying. Many business men who knew nothing of the school and its aims have become interested and ready to co-operate by giving the practical experience so necessary to supplement any theoretical business training. Many who were skeptical as to the value of temporary employees have expressed their willingness to employ permanently the boys who worked for them last summer, as soon as they are graduated from the school. One firm is employing ten boys from the graduating class during the Christmas holidays as a direct result of the good work done by one boy last summer.

The boys themselves feel that they have gained valuable experience, and realize that their good or bad record helps or injures the reputation of the school. They also realize that their chances of securing desirable places on graduation are materially increased by good records in summer employment and correspondingly injured by poor ones.

There are several difficulties attending the carrying out of the plan. First, it is difficult to convince many business men that they will gain by co-operating with the school. As time

goes on, this should become easier, because the testimony of other business men will carry more weight than the opinion of teachers. Second, it is difficult to secure promises of positions far enough ahead so that definite plans can be made for filling them. The average business man is unwilling to promise in February to employ boys in July, because he cannot tell what the condition of his business will be at that time. There are also numerous cases where it is difficult to find boys suitable and willing to fill available positions.

The experience of this year has shown that the two dollars a week minimum wage is not an especially valuable feature of the plan. Most business men prefer to pay what the boy is worth, and this also gives the boy an incentive to do better work to increase his wages.

The personal visits to business houses by representatives of the school have been of distinct advantage. Even where no positions were secured, the business men expressed an interest in the school, and have in a number of cases given permanent employment to graduates.

During the present winter and spring our intention is to reach by letter those firms which employed boys last summer, and to extend our list of co-operating firms by personal visits. Other changes and improvements will probably be made. One member of the Business Men's Advisory Committee has been delegated to act as special adviser in the matter of summer employment and his suggestions will undoubtedly prove very helpful.

The value of such a plan must of course be measured by its results. If the experience of the Boston High School of Commerce furnishes any criterion, the plan is certainly well worth while.

In any large city where the business men are far-sighted enough to recognize their own interests and public-spirited enough to co-operate with the schools some such plan of employment can be successfully carried out. Our experience indicates that this feature of the school's activity is destined to become more important with each succeeding year.